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THE BONNIE JEAN

By

ANNIE S.
SWAN





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FLEMING H. REVELL COMPANY

P u b l i s h e r s

"The Bonnie Jean"

BY

ANNIE S. SWAN

(*Mrs. Burnett Smith*)

AUTHOR OF "ALDERSYDE," "THE LOST IDEAL," "GATES OF EDEN,"
ETC., ETC.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY LILIAN RUSSELL.



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"THE BONNIE JEAN."

CHAPTER I.

"MOTHER, d'ye think 'The Bonnie Jean' 'll be in the nicht after I gang to my bed?" asked little Davie Rintoul, looking up from his lesson-book one grey September evening, just at the twilight hour.

"Hoo should I ken, Davie?" his mother asked, somewhat querulously, for she had been vainly endeavouring for the last half-hour to rock Davie's baby sister to sleep.

The child had been very irritable and fractious all day, and poor Mrs. Rintoul's temper had been sorely tried. She was not a strong woman, as was evidenced by her pale thin face and fragile-looking form. She was much overworked, for she had five little ones, of whom Davie, aged ten, was the eldest, and had her housework to attend to, and her share of net-mending and baiting of the lines to look after. All the neighbours pitied poor Jean Rintoul, and said it was a shame that her husband, who might have been independent almost if he liked, for he was one of the most skilful and clever seamen in Cosy Cove, should spend the best half of his earnings at the "Sailors' Friend," as the popular tavern facing the little harbour was

very inappropriately named, while his poor delicate wife had so much to do and so little to do with. It was a poorly-furnished little place, and Jean Rintoul felt the contrast between her own and her neighbours' houses very sorely, for she was just as fond of a nice house as any of them. Besides, she had been brought up in a very respectable way, for her father, James Forsyth, was the owner of two boats, and his comfortable two-storey house was his own also. Bonnie Jean Forsyth, as she had been called in Cosy Cove, had married wild Dave Rintoul against every wish and desire of her parents and friends; so she had left her early home without a blessing, and she had been bitterly punished. Her father, stern and immovable in his righteous wrath against his wayward girl, would not extend a helping hand to her even in her hour of need. But so long as the kind, big-hearted mother dwelt in the two-storey house, many a basket of provisions, ay, and many an article of clothing, and many a shilling, too, found their way to the cottage by the shore. Jean Rintoul never really knew the misery of being married to a dissipated, shiftless, idle man until her mother died.

A slight cloud touched for a moment the lad's brow at his mother's fretful answer to his question. "Patie Scott's boat an' Sandy Graeme's is in tae, mother, an' they were at Sunderland tae," said he somewhat meekly, and went on reading his lesson.

"Pit doon yer book, Davie, and tak the bairn till I rin doon tae the harbour and see," she said, and Davie, nothing loth, took his little sister in his arms at once.

Mrs. Rintoul put a shawl round her head and ran along the doors, which were deserted, all the inmates having gone down to the harbour to watch the boats come in. It was a dull, cold night, and the green-grey sea washed sullenly about the rocky entrance to the little harbour, as if it were meditating a great break-out before many hours were over. It was a stirring scene down at the pier, where there were now anchored about half-a-dozen boats.

"Is 'The Bonnie Jean' in, Kate?" queried Mrs. Rintoul, touching a neighbour's arm.

"No yet, but she's comin'," was the answer. "It's a puir drave the year, Jean Rintoul. Pate's only gotten aicht-an'-twenty barrels, and he's been awa near three weeks."

"Drave or nae drave mak's sma' odds tae me," answered Jean Rintoul a little bitterly, and turning about again went away back to prepare some supper for her husband.

"The Bonnie Jean" was James Forsyth's boat, in which he employed his son-in-law as a common fisherman.

It was only for his daughter's sake that James Forsyth put up with Rintoul; it was the only way in which he would allow himself to help her.

When Mrs. Rintoul got back to the house she found Davie nursing the baby on a stool near the fire, and it was pleasant to see how quiet and good she was with him.

"Mother, I'm lettin' Katie see my pledge-card, and she thinks it awfu' bonnie. Just see how she looks at it."

Mrs. Rintoul paused and looked over her boy's shoulder with some interest.

"Whaur did ye get it, Davie?"

"At the temperance meetin' last nicht. The maister gied me't, an' see I wrote my name mysel' on it," said Davie proudly, pointing to the name traced in rather tipsy capitals on the blank line left at the foot of the pretty illuminated and coloured pledge-card.

"But what is 't for?"

"Read it, mother. See, I've promised never to drink ony drink as long as I live, nor to gie 't to ony ither body, an' I never will."

"Stop or ye're a wee aulder, Davie, ye'll like yer gless in the 'Friend' as weel's ony ither," was his mother's rather bitter reply.

"Nae fear o' me, mother; ye ken if I've promised an' written down my name, I daurna," said Davie earnestly.

"Ye'll see. Weel, awa to yer bed, see, afore yer faither comes in. He likes a quiet hoose. Katie's near sleepin' tae, see. Off ye go," said his mother, and lifting Katie from his arms laid her softly down in her cradle, while Davie stole away to the ben-end, and crept in beside Robbie and Jamie and wee Nellie, and was soon fast asleep.

CHAPTER II.

ABOUT an hour later a heavy step sounded outside, and the door of the cottage opened to admit David Rintoul. He was a big, broad-shouldered, powerful-looking fellow, with a bushy, brown beard, and dark eyes which looked rather forbiddingly out below strongly-marked eyebrows. It was not a very cheerful or inviting-looking picture his home presented when he set foot in it that night. The kitchen was meagrely furnished, and it was not so clean as it might have been; the fire struggled to blaze above the ash-choked ribs; and a wretched tallow candle flickered on the dusty mantel, its feeble light only serving to show the cheerlessness of the place. There was a cracked cup on the bare table, a loaf of bread, and a piece of unwholesome-looking butter not yet out of the wrapper in which it had come from the shop. At her husband's entrance Mrs. Rintoul looked round from the fire, where she was frying a herring for his supper, and without a smile said listlessly—

“Ye 've gotten hame again.”

“Ay; hae ye naething but a herrin' for a man's supper efter he 's been awa a fortnicht?” he said sullenly.

“It 's ower guid for ye, Davie Rintoul, an' ye wadna hae gotten that had I no borrowed it,” said his

wife angrily. "Ye ken hoo muckle ye left when ye gaed awa."

David Rintoul made no reply, but dragged in a chair with a great noise, which awakened wee Katie in her cradle, and caused her to set up a dismal wail. The sound brought an additional frown on her father's face.

"Here, gie 's my tea an' let 's oot o' this, Jean," he said roughly, and his wife obeyed in silence, and then lifted the wailing baby, and sat down at the fire with her on her knee.

"The bairn 's been ill sin ye gaed awa, Davie," she said presently.

"What 's been the maitter?"

"Want o' meat. I got naething but a drap weak tea an a bit dry breid, so there was naething for her. Look at her; her bits o' airms 'r awa tae skin and bane."

But David Rintoul picked away at his herring, without looking up. Probably he knew very well the little wasted arm was not a pleasant sight.

"If that hard auld faither o' yours wad rise my pay there wad be mair roughness gaun," he said doggedly.

"Ye get as muckle 's ony o' them; besides, what wad be the use; it wad gaun wi' the rest for drink, Davie," answered his wife quietly.

"Ye nicht hae been oot workin' at the hairst," he said presently. "Mony a ane as sair tied as you gangs oot."

His wife raised her head, and looked at him full in the face. He had not many fine feelings, but the contempt expressed in the poor worn eyes of the

woman before him nettled him not a little. He gulped down the remainder of his tea, pushed back his chair, and rose.

"Ye'll need to gie's some money, Davie," she said then, knowing very well that if she waited till he returned her chance of receiving any was gone. He put his hand in his pocket, drew out half-a-sovereign and tossed it on the table.

"That 'll surely dae ye," he said roughly. "Dinna bide up. I'm gaun awa tae Dan'mooth, an' I'll no be hame till late."

Mrs. Rintoul made no reply, and did not offer to touch the coin glittering on the table. Her husband lit his pipe, put on his hat, and strode out.

Jean Rintoul sat long over the miserable fire, with an expression of hopeless misery on her face. Two burning tears forced themselves from her eyes, and, stealing down her cheeks, fell upon the baby's white face, waking her from her troubled sleep. Again the feeble wail echoed through the stillness, and she, tired in body and mind, laid the little one down in her cradle again, while she put a piece of coal on the fire to keep it in all night, and hastily made herself ready for bed. Some hours later the sound of ribald singing broke the stillness of the early Sabbath morning. It was David Rintoul and his boon companions returning from Dangermouth. About two o'clock he stumbled into the house, and fell down on the rag mat in front of the fire. His wife did not disturb him, and he lay there sleeping heavily till the morning. When his wife began to stir about the house he dragged himself up from the floor and lay down on

the top of the bed, where he slept till noon. When he awoke, the only occupant of the house was Davie, sitting on a little stool learning his verses for the Sabbath-school, which the schoolmaster superintended in the school every Sabbath afternoon.

It was one of these peaceful, pleasant days we often have in September, and poor Mrs. Rintoul, glad to escape from her dingy house, had taken the younger ones out for a stroll along the braes. She was beginning to be very anxious about wee Katie, and hoped the fresh air would bring a little colour into her white face.

"Whaur's yer mither, Davie?" queried Davie Rintoul the elder, raising himself up on his elbow.

"Awa oot wi' the bairns, but yer breakfast's a' ready, faither; and she said I was to poor oot yer tea for ye," said Davie eagerly, and springing up he began to busy himself about the scantily-spread table. His father rose and shook himself like a dog just out of water, made a few grumbling remarks, and then sat down without any appetite to his untempting meal of tea and bread and butter. When he finished he lighted his pipe and stretched out his feet on the fender, and Davie pushed away his stool a little to let his father get all the fireplace, and studiously continued his lessons.

"What are ye daein', Davie?" asked his father.

"Lairnin' my psalm, faither," answered Davie; then he turned back the leaves of the big Bible to the beginning where lay his precious pledge-card.

"What's that?" asked his father, the bright colours catching his eye.

"It's my pledge, faither," said Davie proudly, but rather timidly too, for he knew his father's failing very well, and feared he might not approve of the step he had taken at the Band of Hope meeting on Wednesday night.

"Let's see 't."

Very reluctantly Davie handed over the beloved card into his father's careless fingers.

"Ay, an' whaur did ye get that?" asked Davie Rintoul.

"Frae the maister at the Band o' Hope on Wednesday night, faither," said Davie, and stretched out his hand pleading for his treasure, for he did not like the expression on his father's face. Then a cry of pain escaped his lips, for his father very deliberately crushed up the dainty thing in his hand and tossed it into the very middle of a bright flame in the fire, which consumed it in a moment.

"Tell the maister tae mind his ain business, an' no be settin' up bairns tae think theirsels better nor their faithers. He's paid tae teach the skule, tell him, an' if he disna stick tae'd, it'll be the waur for him. An' if I hear o' you gaun tae ony of his meetin's (I will not defile my pages with the profane adjective he used), I'll gie ye a sair skin; mind what I have said."

Davie rose and ran out of the house. He was a quick-tempered boy, and there were wrong and passionate words on his lips burning for utterance. He ran away along the braes near to the lighthouse on wild Cromar's Head, and then throwing himself on the daisied turf burst into a passion of bitter weeping.

"Hulloa, Davie, what's the maitter wi' ye, bairn?" queried a cheerful, hearty voice which Davie recognised at once as that of his grandfather, the skipper of "The Bonnie Jean." He sat up, rubbed his eyes with his black knuckles, thereby making some very peculiar-looking daubs on his face, and finally picked himself up and stood rather shame-facedly before his grandfather. After all, it was rather foolish of him to cry, as if he had been a baby or a girl, but then he had been so proud of his pledge-card.

"Ye've no telt me what's the matter yet," said the skipper, looking rather compassionately at the poorly-clad little urchin before him. His grand-children did not do him much credit in Cosy Cove, for they were the poorest-clad and the "silliest" looking bairns in the village. But it was no fault of theirs, poor things; they could not help their existence, and they were too young yet to help or better themselves.

"I got a pledge-caird frae the maister, and faither threw 't in the fire, grandfaither; that's a'," said Davie, and stooping picked up a stone and shied it at a passing sea-bird which was filling the air with its shrill cries.

"A pledge-caird!" said James Forsyth rather grimly. "I daursay if the word 'abstain' was prentit on 't it wad be enough to raise yer faither's daunder. So ye've turned teetotal, Davie?"

"Ay, grandfaither, an' when I'm a man I'll be mair teetotal than ever," said Davie manfully.

"Ay; what way that?" asked the skipper, out of curiosity.

"Because when folk drinks whusky, grandfaither,

they never hae a guid hoose, nor claes, nor meat like ither folk," said Davie mournfully.

An expression of sadness crossed the skipper's face, and he let his rough hand fall kindly on the lad's shoulder.

"Stick tae that like a man, Davie. If the maister's lairnt ye that, it's the best lesson ye ever got in the skule."

"When's 'The Bonnie Jean' gaun oot again, grandfather?" queried Davie, not seeming to heed the old man's last speech, and standing with his eyes fixed lovingly on the trim little craft anchored just at the harbour mouth.

"On Tuesday likely. Wad ye like to be a fisherman, Davie?"

"Wad I no?" Davie's eyes sparkled as he spoke. "Grandfather, hoo wee was the wee-est laddie ye ever took awa' to the fishin' in 'The Bonnie Jean'?"

"Yer uncle Jock. He gaed when he was twel' an' sailed fower year in 'The Jean,' an' syne was drooned at Yarmouth. A brave wee chappie he was tae, puir Jock!" said the old man, his eyes growing dim with a long-gone but still unforgotten sorrow.

"I'm ten, grandfather, but I'm big; maybe ye'll tak' me when I'm eleeven," said Davie wistfully.

"I'll dae that, laddie, an' see here, Davie Rintoul, if ye stick tae yer pledge like a man, 'The Bonnie Jean,' or anither boat as bonnie, 'll be yours when I'm dune wi't."

"Oh, grandfather!"

Pen fails me to express all that Davie's breathless exclamation implied.

"That 's tae say if ye stick tae the sea, an' mak a guid sailor; mind what I 've said, Davie. I 'm a man o' my word, an' yer grandmither made a wark wi' ye," he added softly; and, though Davie did not guess it, that reason weighed more than anything else with the skipper of "The Bonnie Jean." "An' if ye 're a guid laddie, an' keep on growin'," added the old man, "I 'll tak' ye aboard 'The Jean' in the spring."

I cannot quite tell you what that promise of his grandfather meant to Davie. From that day one thought was 'with him night and day, filling his mind during waking hours, and haunting him pleasantly in the land of dreams. It was that when the spring came, he was to go to sea with his grandfather. Also three words were engraved on his heart in letters of gold. They were—"THE BONNIE JEAN."

CHAPTER III.

IN the first week of October the fleet from Cosy Cove sailed away to the fishing grounds off the Irish coast, and for a few weeks there was very little stir in the village. There were very few men folk about, and, as the school was taken up again after the summer holidays, in the daytime there was hardly a body to be seen about the doors. The weather grew very cold and stormy, and, as a natural consequence, there were many anxious hearts in Cosy Cove. When the wintry weather swept in Jean Rintoul was never seen outside of her door, and her children ran about more neglected and miserable-looking than ever. Wee Katie was very, very poorly now, and the parish doctor said her only chance of life was in plenty of good, nourishing food, and warm, comfortable clothing. These, of course, the poor mother had not the wherewithal to procure, and she was too proud to ask charity. Had her mother been alive it would have been different, for we are never too proud to ask mother-help; but now there was nothing for David Rintoul's wife up at the two-storey house; for a grim, close-fisted maiden aunt kept the skipper's house, and there was no use expecting anything from her. She had, indeed, never spoken to her niece since her marriage. All the respectable connections of the Forsyths had

been sore disgraced with bonnie Jean's rash and foolish leap into the boat of matrimony, and now they allowed her to drift on the rough waters, comforting themselves with the thought that she had brought it on herself; and that as she had made her bed she must just lie on it and not look to others to smooth it for her. In her sorrow and poverty Jean Rintoul grew very bitter; and so miserable a home was the little cottage by the sea that even the thought of the spring, and the magic words "Bonnie Jean," failed at times to cheer up poor wee Davie. His heart was very sore about his mother and poor Katie, of whom he was very fond. The little thing loved him, too, and would lie contented in his arms many a time when she was grumbling and fretful elsewhere. Davie had got another pledge-card from the master, but he had hid it away under the mattress of his bed, and he had made up his mind that when "The Bonnie Jean" came in again he would give the precious card into his grandfather's keeping, in case his father might lay hands on it again and destroy it.

On the last Wednesday in October two boats came sailing into the bay early in the afternoon. They were gladly welcomed, more especially as they reported all well, and that the others were following up behind. They had had a good take, and the men were in the best of spirits. On his way home from school, Davie Rintoul saw the two boats come in, and flew down to the pier to see whether one was "The Bonnie Jean." Disappointed that she had not yet come in, he took himself away home. He found nothing but misery there. The fire was nearly out,

and his mother sat on the front of the bed with wee Katie in her arms. Oh! why did his little sister look like that? Why were the poor wee lips so pinched and blue, the eyes staring so fixedly, yet without meaning in their depths?

"Mither! mither! what's the matter wi' Katie?" he cried in agony, but his mother never spoke. Then Davie ran out of the house, and as fast as his legs could carry him away along to the pretty house beside the school. In such an extremity who could help him and his mother so well as his best friend, the schoolmaster? That gentleman was at tea with his wife when Davie ran past the parlour window and knocked at the door. He rose himself and went to open it.

"Oh, pleassir, will ye come along tae oor hoose? I think wee Katie's deid, an' mither winna speak," said Davie breathlessly, and with a pitiful shake in his voice. Hearing that, the schoolmaster's wife came out to the door too.

"Perhaps you had better go, Mary," said Mr. Dunlop. "In the case of a sick baby you could do more good than I."

Mrs. Dunlop nodded, and went at once for her bonnet, and in a few minutes she was walking swiftly by Davie's side away along to the cottage on the shore. Mary Dunlop had no little ones of her own now, for scarlet fever had robbed her of her only two at one stroke, but her great sorrow had only made her sweet nature sweeter and more unselfish still, and she was greatly beloved in Cosy Cove. A great shadow gathered on her face when she entered the miserable

home of the Rintouls, and her eyes filled with tears at sight of the wee white face pressed close to the breast of the unhappy mother. Jean Rintoul looked up rather defiantly at sight of Mrs. Dunlop, and clasped her child more closely in her arms, as if afraid it was to be taken from her.

"Let me see your poor little baby, Mrs. Rintoul," said Mrs. Dunlop in the gentlest tones of her gentle voice. "I have had some experience of sick children, you know, and I may be able to do something for yours."

"She's deid," said Mrs. Rintoul briefly, but no longer resisted Mrs. Dunlop's gentle entreaty. So the schoolmaster's wife took the poor little thing in her kind arms and sat down at the fire with her. But though life was not yet quite gone, her experienced eye told her it was just flickering in the socket. So she did not disturb the child, and in a little while the white lids fluttered and a gentle sigh passed the lips. So, quietly and painlessly, did wee Katie pass from the earth, which had not been a very happy home for her, into the Kingdom where Jesus takes the lambs in His arms.

"Your baby is safe with mine in the Kingdom, Mrs. Rintoul," said Mary Dunlop, through dropping tears. "I know what you feel about it, but some day you will think with me that it is far better, and I have two in Heaven."

She gently laid the little one on the bed, and then her kind hand fell on the drooping shoulder of the bereaved mother. She would have given much to have seen tears in those wearied eyes, but they were

dry and hard-looking, and her face wore an expression of intense bitterness.

"Have you a little white dress for your baby, Mrs. Rintoul?" asked Mary Dunlop. "If not, I can give you one."

"I hae naething," said Jean Rintoul quietly, yet with dogged bitterness; "ye see a' I hae about ye. Whaur could I hae siller tae buy white frocks or ony ither kind?"

Then Mary Dunlop slipped away back to the schoolhouse, and opened the drawer in her own bedroom where lay her best treasures, the little garments her babies had worn in life. She took from among them a robe as white as snow, made dainty and sweet with the trimmings her own hands had wrought before the babies came; also some other little needful things, and sped back with them to the cottage by the shore. She found it exactly as she had left it, so she got a basin with water in it, sponged wee Katie's face and hands, and then proceeded to robe her in the pretty white gown—the bereaved mother looking on with apparent indifference, but real interest, all the time. Oh, how sweet and fair did wee Katie look, robed for her last sleep! for kind death had smoothed away all the lines of weariness and pain, and it was as sweet a baby face as mother's eyes ever rested on.

"See how pretty she is!" whispered Mrs. Dunlop. "You have only to look at her face to know it is better with her where she has gone. You know there is no pain there."

Then with rare delicacy she stole away again and left the mother alone with her child.

All the time Mrs. Dunlop had been in the house wee Davie had sat on his stool looking with wondering and reverent eyes at all she did for his little sister. But after she went away, and his mother laid herself down on the bed beside Katie as if in utter weariness, he stole out and away down to see whether "The Bonnie Jean" had come in. It was dark now, but the moon was breaking through a rift in the cloudy sky, and there was a wondrous light of beauty shimmering on the sea. Ay, there was "The Bonnie Jean" sure enough, drifting serenely at her anchorage, and Davie's heart leaped within him, for he just felt as if she was his own boat, for was she not promised to him by his grandfather, who never broke his word?

He ran nimbly along the pier, expecting to find his grandfather and his father at least on board, but there was no light to be seen, and the deck was clean swept and everything apparently left tidy for the night. Where then had his father gone? Into the "Sailor's Friend" likely, or perhaps away up to the "Black Bull" at Dangermouth. Davie wanted very much to get on board "The Bonnie Jean," but another boat, the "Heather Bell," belonging to Jock Graham's father, lay alongside nearer the quay side; also, there was a space between the boats which Davie doubted would be too wide for him to jump. However, he scrambled down the narrow iron ladder a bit, grasped the stout rope which fastened the "Heather Bell," and swung himself aboard. Then with cool daring he climbed on her side, and with a spring cleared the space of water between the boats and landed on the deck of "The Jean." How delightful

it was to find himself alone on the deck of his own boat, and to fancy he was its master, taking care of it while his men had gone home for the night. He crept all over the boat, into the little cabin, peered into the berths, but it was too dark to see much there; so finally he came up again and coiled himself up on a pile of nets, with his face turned out to sea, and began to fancy himself away on the big ocean, monarch of all he surveyed. The growing lateness of the hour, the weird light of the moon, the murmur of the restless sea, the gentle motion of the boat swayed by the receding tide, all helped the fancy, and for a while Davie was in a wonderful dreamland of his own. He loved the sea with a strange, passionate love, and even its wildest tumults could not make him afraid. He came to himself at length and started up, for it was time he was away home. But what was his astonishment to find that the boat had drifted with the receding tide to the utmost limit of its chain, and that now the space of water between it and the "Heather Bell" was too wide to admit of his jumping it. So what could he do but content himself on board till morning, or until the tide flowed again and brought him alongside the "Heather Bell." It was delightful to think of spending a night at sea, and except for the thought of his mother's anxiety about him, he would have been as happy as a king. Looking across at Cosy Cove he saw that the lights in the houses were nearly all out, so that he must have sat dreaming a long time. There was scarcely a chance of anyone coming along the pier that night, so there was nothing for him but to find a bed below. In great glee at his

new experience, Davie crept down and into one of the berths, and in a little while was sound asleep—lulled to rest by the music of the waves.

About midnight, when the moon was at its full, a figure came rather unsteadily along the pier. It made straight for the moorings of "The Bonnie Jean," and, after staying a little while there, walked unsteadily back to the village. And Davie slept unconsciously in his cosy berth, and "The Bonnie Jean" drifted, drifted with the receding tide.

CHAPTER IV.

ABOUT midnight Mrs. Rintoul, who had fallen into a heavy slumber by the side of her dead baby, was awakened by her husband's noisy entrance into the house. She raised herself up, and seeing, even in the dim light, that he was very drunk, she gently drew the cover over Katie's face, and sat up herself on the front of the bed as if to protect her.

"Whaur hae ye been sae late, Dave? it's efter twal," she said. "An' faither gaed by jist at the darkenin'."

David Rintoul replied only by an oath, and bade her get up and mend the fire, and make things comfortable for a man when he came home to his own house. She meekly obeyed, and having stirred up the fire, set on the kettle, and went to see what the cupboard contained. Her larder was never very full at any time, but it was even more than unusually bare to-night; there was only what country folks call the "heel" of a loaf on the bread-plate, and there was no butter nor cheese, nor even a despised herring to be seen.

"Are ye hungry, Dave? I've naething in the hoose," she said quietly.

"No; I kent brawly what tae expeck, so I supper 't mysel' at Dan'mooth," was his surly answer. "Ye

couldna weel hae less than naething; but I doot it 'll be waur wi' ye afore it be better; I 've gotten the seck frae yer faither."

"What for, Dave? What by-ordinar' thing hae ye been daein'?"

"I met twa cronies when we were lyin' in Kinsale, an' we got croose thegither, that was a'," he said. "He 's an unco guid man, yer faither, ower guid for this warld, I telt him. He thinks there never was a boat siccan's 'The Jean,' but I 'se warrand he 'll think mair o' her neist time he sees her."

Mrs. Rintoul did not take particular note of the latter part of her husband's speech; her mind was occupied by the thought of his dismissal, for what would become of them now? She knew very well that no other man would employ Dave; many had wondered at James Forsyth putting up with him so long.

David Rintoul lit his pipe—for whatever the privations his wife and children had to endure he never lacked a "fill" for his pipe—and sat puffing away until he grew drowsy and closed his eyes. His wife sat and watched him till he fell asleep, and then lay down herself again, for her waking hours were not so pleasant that she should seek to prolong them. He waked up in the early morning, and stumbled into the ben-end, where he threw himself on the old sofa and fell asleep again. When he awoke the second time the bairns were up, for he heard their din in the kitchen. Pulling out his watch, he saw that it was twenty minutes to seven, early enough yet, he thought, and was about to lie down again when a sud-

den idea struck him, and he pulled aside the shutter and looked out. The boats filled the tiny harbour, and some were moored at the outside close to the shelter of a natural pier formed by the rocks. He recognised one and all in the still morning light, and a strange expression crossed his face when he saw that "The Bonnie Jean" was not at her anchorage. That banished sleep, so he strode into the kitchen.

The children were at their breakfast of porridge and treacle—only Davie was absent. His eyes fell then upon the bed, and when he saw the counterpane pulled right over the baby's face he spoke up gruffly enough to his wife—

"Ye'll choke the bairn, Jean"; but before he could say any more she turned to him and held up a warning finger.

"Come here, Dave," she said, and he mechanically obeyed and walked over to the bed. Then she gently put back the covering from the child, and he saw her face, not as he had been wont to see it in life, fretful and pain-livid, and pitiful to look upon, but pure and sweet and rounded, for Death had been kinder to Katie than her father had ever been. A shiver ran through the strong man's frame, and he sank upon the bed.

"Is she deid, Jean? When was 't?" he asked unsteadily.

"Yestreen," replied the mother very softly; for somehow the light of heaven which lay on Katie's face had smoothed away the bitterness out of the mother's heart, and she could even say with Mary Dunlop that it was "far better."

She moved away over to the window, and looked out for a minute in silence.

"'The Jean' 's awa oot again this morning, Davie. They 're surely in a hurry. I think Davie maun be awa wi' his grandfaither, for he hasna been in a' nicht. He whiles gangs up and bides, ye ken; and he 's aye speakin' aboot gaun aff in 'The Jean.' But, Guid guide us! there 's faither fleein' doon like a man possessed. What does it mean?"

"Has Davie no been in a' nicht, Jean?" asked David Rintoul in a low, strange voice.

"No. Awa along to the harbour, man, and see what 's up. Mercy me! the hale toon's turnin' oot surely!"

But David Rintoul would not move, so Jean herself ran out and along the pier, where there was quite a crowd gathered.

"What is 't?—what 's up? Whaur 's 'The Jean,' faither?" she asked breathlessly.

"She 's brak frae her moorin's, Jean Rintoul, or somebody 's let her aff, and she 's awa guid kens whaur," was the answer from half-a-dozen mouths.

Then quite suddenly a great fear gathered about the heart of Jean Rintoul, and she made her way to her father's side.

"Was Davie up wi' you last nicht, faither?"

"Davie? No. I hinna seen him sin' afore we gaed aff," he answered. "Is he no at hame?"

"No. He hasna been in ony o' your hooses, has he?" she asked, staring helplessly at the women round her. They all shook their heads.

Then a light seemed to dawn on James Forsyth.

"Wad the laddie gang aff in the boat hissel'?" he asked. "He couldna dae 't."

"Not him; he hadna strength to lowse the chain," was the universal answer.

"I saw somebody aboard 'The Jean' last nicht as I was gaun tae my bed," said an old woman whose house stood nearest the harbour. "It was like a laddie gaun up and doon, but I thocht the munelicht was playin' tricks wi' me, and I thocht nae mair o 't."

A babel of eager discussion followed, but nobody seemed inclined to accept the idea that wee Davie could have gone off in the boat himself. The skipper was a shrewd old man, and there was a suspicion in his head which he did not care to make public.

"Is yer man in, Jean?" he asked.

"Ay, he 's been in a' nicht," she answered faintly.

"Awa an' bid him come alang an' let 's hear his opinion on this queer affair. An' keep up yer heart about Davie. Supposin' he is aff in 'The Jean' he 'll be safe eneuch, an' I 'se warrand he 's nae farther than roun' Cromar's Heid," he said assuringly; but others shook their heads, for there had been a stiff breeze blowing all night which made them doubt whether the runaway boat would be found so near at home. Jean slowly turned about and went away back to the house. Had she lost two children, she wondered? Had her cup of misery not been full enough that her first-born and best-beloved should be taken too?

"Dave," she gasped, directly she was within the door, "'The Jean' 's awa oot tae the open sea, an'

oor Davie's aboard. Kirsten Wilson saw him last nicht, so we've lost twa instead o' ane."

A strange cry rose from the lips of David Rintoul, and he rose shaking from head to foot. In the broad light of day the heinousness of his sin was laid bare before him, and his punishment was not lacking.

"Jean! Jean! it was me that did it. I let her aff frae her moorin's to be revenged on the skipper for payin' me aff. I wadna hae dune 't had I been sober. Eh, woman, dinna look at me like that; it's bad eneuch without that."

A loud moan escaped the white lips of Jean Rintoul.

"O Dave! Dave!" she cried, and tottering toward the bed she fell upon it, and for a time her sorrows were forgotten in the mercifulness of unconsciousness.

CHAPTER V.

THE tugs were lying outside the harbour at Dangermouth, waiting to tow the fleet out when daylight came. The tide was full at six o'clock, and by seven the harbour presented a very lively appearance. Dangermouth is a much larger place than Cosy Cove, and it is quite a sight to see the fleet going out or coming in. About eight o'clock the boats, about forty in all, sailed away out of the bay, being towed by the tugs out to the open sea. It was a fine clear morning, and the craft on the sea could be seen for many miles around. There were big steamers on their way from London to Leith, merchantmen from every quarter of the globe, and fishing vessels of every size and style. The Dangermouth fleet very soon parted company, for some were bound for the Irish coast, some for the Isle of Man, and others for the English shores. The latter, sailing eastward, spied one solitary boat apparently drifting on the breast of the sea, and, as far as they could see with the aid of a glass, there seemed to be nobody aboard her.

"She looks uncommon like a Cosy Cove boat," said one of the men. "What can be the meaning o't?"

Curious to penetrate the mystery, one of the tugs steamed directly for her, and in a short time they saw

plainly enough that she was a Cosy Cove boat, and that her only occupant was a little boy sitting forlornly on a pile of nets. Coming nearer still they recognised the boat and its occupant too, for "The Bonnie Jean" was well enough known to all the tugmasters. So was wee Davie Rintoul, for he was never away from the harbour mouth when he was out of school.

Very soon the tug was alongside, and the captain hailed Davie in rather an amused voice.

"Hulloa, skipper, are ye on yer ain hook noo? Hoo mony barrels hae ye gotten, eh?"

Davie laughed back, and tossed his cap up in the air. Much as he had enjoyed his trip, he was not sorry to behold the means whereby he could get safely back to Cosy Cove. In a very short time the tug had "The Bonnie Jean" in tow, and Davie was transferred to the deck of the steamer, where he explained as he best could how he had come to make a voyage on his own account. But the tug sailors could not very well understand the matter, and were not inclined to believe that "The Jean" had drifted from her moorings. However, it might be explained when they got back to Cosy Cove. Directly the tug appeared round Cromar's Head, with "The Jean" sailing beautifully behind her, she was caught sight of in Cosy Cove; and so swiftly did the news spread that when they reached the harbour mouth the pier was thronged with human beings, foremost among whom were James Forsyth and David Rintoul. It was now about ten o'clock in the forenoon, and a search party had just returned from the opposite direction, while

another lot had set off along the brae heads to Danger-mouth. The latter had of course seen the tug and her tow, but had not yet returned to Cosy Cove. A great cheer rent the air when the boat came in, and in a minute, greatly to Davie's astonishment, he felt himself clasped close in his father's arms, where he had never been since his childish days, before he had learned to be only afraid of his father. Then David Rintoul strode away through the crowd, who fell apart to let him pass, and made straight for his own dwelling. The news that wee Davie was safe had of course already been conveyed to the stricken mother, and she was waiting for them just within the door.

"Here 's Davie, Jean; he 's safe," her husband said; and then Davie sprang into his mother's arms.

"Dinna greet, mither, I 'm a' richt; I jist got a fine sail by mysel'," said Davie, crying and laughing in one breath. "I didna mean tae gang awa, for I kent ye wad wunner whaur I was."

"I ken, I ken, my bairn, ye was aye a guid laddie," sobbed Jean Rintoul. "Thank the Lord, ye are safe!"

David lingered about the house a little, and then made off again down to the harbour. He was as restless as the waves tossing under the westerly breeze, and some magnet drew him continually toward the sea. When the husband and wife were left alone again there was a long silence—a solemn silence, too, for great emotions make us all solemn.

"Jean," said David Rintoul then, in low and earnest tones, "will ye forgi'e me—will ye let byganes be byganes—an' I 'll mak' a better man tae ye than I

hae ever been yet? I ken what a puir life o 't ye hae haen wi' me, lassie, but I 'll try an' mend frae this day."

Again there was a silence, and Jean Rintoul kept her face buried on her arms on the table, sobbing still.

"Jean, speak tae me, woman. I mean what I say. Wull ye let me try tae mak' ye forget the past? I 'll work hard, lassie (an' I *can* work when I hae a wull), for you an' the bairns."

Then Jean Rintoul rose and laid her hand softly on her husband's arm. The eyes looking up to his rugged face were dim with earnest feeling, also her face was softened into something of the beauty of long ago. These gentle fingers guided him unconsciously over to the bed where the baby slept its last sleep, like the petals of a lily folded to its rest.

"Ye mean what ye say, Davie; promise me it again for wee Katie's sake," whispered Jean Rintoul with wistful pathos.

"Ay, so help me, God! an' I 'll never taste drink again while I live, for it 's wrocht a' the mischief. No anither drap shall cross my lips, Jeanie, I promise ye here solemnly, for wee Katie's sake."

Jean Rintoul moved nearer to her husband, so near that her dress touched him, and her head rested against his shoulder. Then he put his arm about the poor drooping figure and drew it very close to him. The old love was not dead yet, and there was a new love born of sorrow, the outcome of the deepest emotions of the heart commingling with the old, and which was the earnest of a new, sweet, better life,

which would make the father and mother meet for the kingdom whither their wee Katie had gone.

In the gloaming David Rintoul walked away up to the two-storeyed house and knocked at the door. It was opened by the sour-faced aunt, who very snap-pishly inquired his business, and very gingerly bade him enter. The skipper of "The Bonnie Jean" was smoking his pipe over the cosy kitchen fire, with Davie on a stool at his feet.

"Rin awa hame, Davie, my man, yer mither wants ye," said David Rintoul; and Davie flew off at once; for when his father spoke to him in that kind and pleasant tone he would have gone to earth's utmost ends to do his bidding.

"I've com'd up, skipper, tae tell ye that it was me that let aff the boat yestreen," began David Rintoul then, in an honest, manly fashion which considerably astonished his father-in-law.

"I jaloused as muckle, Dave Rintoul," was his brief and inscrutable reply.

"I ken brawly I am liable tae a heavy punishment, an' I believe I wad like better tae be punished than tae be let aff, I sae richly deserve it," continued David Rintoul. "But if ye *wull* let me aff, an' gi'e 's anither chance for Jean's sake an' for the bairns', I'll try an' make up tae ye for 't."

"That needs a thocht or twa, Dave Rintoul," said the old man laconically, though hardly able to control his surprise.

"I hae made up my mind, skipper, that with God's help I'll never taste anither drap o' drink, an' I mean tae try to mak' up tae Jean for the miserable

life she 's haen wi' me," said David Rintoul with yet greater earnestness.

"If that be the set o't, Dave, gi'e 's yer hand," said the old man, starting up. "I *wull* gi'e ye anither chance for the sake o' that game wee gallant o' yours if for naething else. God gi'e ye strength tae stand, my man, for oor ain strength is no eneuch."

When the grim aunt entered the kitchen by-and-by, she was greatly amazed and perhaps not very well pleased to see how cosy and friendly-like her brother and wild Dave Rintoul were sitting together; and from what she could gather from their talk they seemed to be discussing some new arrangements of the shares of "The Bonnie Jean." So from that night there was peace, abiding peace between the two-storey house and the cottage by the sea.

* * * * *

These things happened some years ago. "The Bonnie Jean" is still to the fore, however, as able for her work as any of her compeers. But the old skipper has retired from active labours now, and smokes his pipe of peace about the doors; often sauntering into his daughter's comfortable home, just for a look at the winsome face which used to be the sunshine at the two-storey house. It *is* winsome now; for happiness is a great smoother away of the lines of age and care; and Jean Rintoul is the happiest woman in Cosy Cove. So she says herself, and she should know best. Davie Rintoul nobly kept his vow. The inner depths of the man's nature, the *good* which lies even in the hardest and most wayward heart, had been truly

touched, and had brought forth their good fruits. Wee Davie, a big strapping fellow, though he is "wee Davie" still to his mother and his grandfather, sails with his father in "The Bonnie Jean," and they share the profits alike. But there is a splendid new boat building at Dangermouth to the order of Davie Rintoul the younger, and though the name has not been quite decided on, it is likely to be "The Wee Katie;" for the little child whose life on earth was not so bright as it should have been, but whose influence made so much difference to those among whom she sojourned for a little while, is not and will never be forgotten. There are two pledge-cards hanging in gold frames above the mantel in Mrs. Rintoul's pretty and handsomely furnished parlour. Both bear the name "David Rintoul," and Mr. Dunlop finds father and son able and hearty helpers in his temperance work. So blessed has that quiet but earnest work been, that I hear from my friend, Mary Dunlop, that the doors of "The Sailors' Friend" are likely to be permanently closed, because the trade has utterly gone down in Cosy Cove.





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